

FACT SHEET

Fact sheets serve a variety of purposes. For example, reporters use them for background information, organizations refer to them for program details, and they can be used to answer questions from the general public and other interested parties. As a result, they come in a variety of styles and forms. Often fact sheets are used to break down complicated information into more digestible pieces. To facilitate understanding and ease of reading, individual sections of the fact sheet are frequently captioned to guide the reader to a specific section.

Some fact sheets are organized chronologically, citing important events that have occurred over time. Others include sections identifying various partners in an endeavor. For example, your fact sheet might briefly identify each of your *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* coalition members.

While the format for fact sheets varies, good ones have several things in common. They are well-organized and cover the specific subject in enough depth to provide the reader with an understanding of the subject. As a rule, fact sheets are one to two pages. However, some are longer, particularly if they cover a complex subject. Good fact sheets are clear and easy to read.

Occasionally, fact sheets contain statistical or numeric information, such as demographics, transportation or air quality statistics, or community information. When presenting such data, use charts, graphs, or other visual devices to make them easier for the reader to comprehend.

When several subjects need to be covered, it is best to write separate fact sheets. For example, you could write a fact sheet on ozone, another for particulate matter, etc., or write just one fact sheet describing air pollutants generally. Developing a series of short, specific fact sheets is often preferable, because people are more inclined to read brief materials. In addition, it is easy to add new information to your standard collection of resource information, because you only need to prepare or revise a short piece rather than a long, complex document. (The *It All Adds Up* marketing kit is a good example of “stepped” fact sheets.)

Fact sheets are an economical, time-saving communications tool; therefore, the time spent planning and preparing good ones is time well-spent. Good fact sheets will help you avoid writing multiple letters or giving long explanations on the phone, and the information provided will be clear and consistent.

Tip: Fact sheets are more visually interesting and appealing if they are printed on special paper, such as the “cloud” stock used in the “Marketing Materials” section of this toolkit. That particular stock can be found in most office supply stores.

Sample

- **What is *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air*?**

What does dropping off the kids, running by the bank, and picking up dinner have to do with cleaner air? Trip chaining — combining errands into one sensible trip — is just one of the many actions you can take, and probably already are taking, that help improve the quality of our air. Small, easy steps such as trip chaining, maintaining your car, and choosing alternative modes of transportation, are the main themes of the *It All Adds Up to Cleaner Air* public education program.

The program applauds individuals who are already incorporating these actions into their daily routines — while encouraging others to take a few simple steps whenever they can — to help reduce air pollution and traffic congestion.

Through community-based outreach, supported by broadcast and print public service announcements, the program is designed to increase the public's awareness of the connection between their travel choices, air quality, and traffic congestion.

- **Why is it important for *(community name)*?**

(Insert local statistics on air quality in your area, e.g., non-attainment for ozone, etc.). This program provides information relevant to *(community name)*, thereby empowering its residents to help reduce air pollution, lessen traffic congestion, and improve the quality of life in our community.

- **Who is sponsoring/coordinating this effort?**

(If coalition is sponsoring, name of coalition) is made up of a broad range of organizations that are committed to improving the air quality and reducing traffic tie-ups in our community. *(Insert names of organizations or types of organizations participating, e.g., state and local government, transportation industry, environmental advocacy groups, public health professions, influential community groups, businesses, consumer groups, media, civic organizations, and health care providers.)*

(If organization is sponsoring, name of organization) is committed to improving the air quality and reducing tie-ups in our community. In an effort to increase awareness of the connection between our personal travel choices, air quality, and traffic congestion, *(name of coordinating organization)* launched this program. *(Insert short description of organization's goals and how a program such as this supports those goals.)*

Although the program has been launched locally by *(name of coalition and/or coordinating organization)*, it is part of a national transportation and air quality initiative supported by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency. *(Community name)* has joined this nationwide effort, because we are committed to reducing traffic congestion and air pollution in our community.

- **How can an individual make a difference?**

There are many actions a person can take to help improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion. These include trip chaining (combining errands into one sensible trip), sharing rides, taking mass transit, maintaining your vehicle, fueling your gas tank at night, and biking or walking. These are easy steps that fit into busy schedules without major inconvenience.

- **What else is being done in *(community name)*?**

Some other activities that *(organization or coalition name)* has sponsored include:
(Insert highlights of successful experiences or programs that the public may be familiar with, but may not realize were supported by this organization or coalition, e.g., city buses not charging passengers on ozone-action days.)